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## THE RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY TO ECONOMICS.<sup>1</sup>

THE task imposed by the subject of this paper is the fixing of an equation between two undetermined and variable factors. The alternatives presented are: (1) discussion of nomenclature; (2) discussion of the ultimate purpose of social knowledge and of the consequent relations between divisions of labor in accumulating and organizing social knowledge. Assuming the liberty to use the terms "Economics" and "Sociology" in the sense in which the writer is accustomed to employ them, this paper will follow, in the main, the second course.

The postulates which sanction attempts to gather knowledge of social relations are: (1) that association of human beings is inevitable; (2) that knowledge of social relations is the condition of so adjusting individual behavior to the requirements of association that the interests involved will be most completely subserved. In other words knowledge of social facts and relations has telic value in the pursuit of human happiness. This telic value resides not merely in revelation of tendencies within which men are powerless. Its desirability consists not in forewarning men of what they have to expect from the operation of inexorable cosmic energies which it is comfortable to understand for the sake of intelligent resignation to fate. In that case there would be no more virtue in knowledge of social forces than in information about encroachments of the sea upon the land of the earth's surface, or about the rate at which the sun is losing its heat. Social knowledge is worth getting as an indication of what associated men may do to increase their happiness.

It is perhaps superfluous to acknowledge the utilitarian purpose and the useful service of that specific inquiry into one series of social relations which dates the beginning of its scientific stage from the work of Adam Smith. Desire to know and

<sup>1</sup> Read at the recent meeting of the American Economic Association in New York. The subject was assigned by the committee on programme.

so to control conditions precedent to human happiness has been conspicuously and continuously the spur to economic inquiry. Society is not likely to overestimate the labors of the economists in expounding relations within their peculiar field of investigation. The preliminary remark is, therefore, in order, that the writer of this paper has no sympathy with the men who consciously or unconsciously make the term "Sociology" stand for an effort to supersede or to discredit economic science. If, as this paper assumes, there is demand for division of labor corresponding with the distinguishing names—economics and sociology—it is because there are stages in the accumulation and interpretation of knowledge about society which call for differentiated methods and complementary processes. Economics and sociology are not to be regarded, however, as rival disciplines, but as interdependent portions of social science. The presumption that there is special call for arbitration and conciliation between economics and sociology rests primarily upon failure to perceive that after economic phenomena are interpreted, only one of many elements in social reactions is thereby approximately explained.

There is an easily distinguishable field of inquiry about the inclusion of which within the scope of economics there is practically no question. It is *inquiry concerning the correlations of phenomena connected with wealth, in so far as the desire for wealth is the determining, or at least the differentiating factor in those phenomena.* This paper takes for granted that there is a legitimate and necessary science (or group of sciences) of such phenomena, and that its proper designation is Economics. The scope of the science (or sciences) of Economics becomes debatable as soon as conclusions transgress the limits of abstraction and involve judgments upon the relation of economic phenomena to the remaining sum of human pursuits and interests. The conventional term "Political Economy" not less than the narrower and more special phrases "applied economics," "social economics," "the art of economics," "practical economics," etc., implies what need not be argued, viz., that abstract economics alone is as inadequate

to the task of directing social coöperation as is abstract physics alone to solve the problems which confront the navigator or the military engineer.

At the same time the men who devote themselves to the study of economic phenomena will, in the majority of cases, have impulse, if not even genius, to think out plans of social procedure. Hence it has come that, especially since the younger Mill, the tendency has grown almost universal to combine with abstract economics investigation of actual conditions; the aim being invention or criticism of social policies and programmes.

When this concrete work is undertaken, the question necessarily presents itself—not what is the relative capacity of the economists and of other men to fit themselves for judgments upon principles of social procedure, but, what measure of sanction can be derived from abstract economics alone for decisions upon programmes which involve the total of human interests?

Two views upon the question are imaginable: (1) that abstract economics supplies all the insight into social relations necessary as a qualification for guiding social procedure; (2) that it does *not* supply all the necessary insight.

If we adopt the former view, we are compelled to believe that every relation of individuals to institutions is a phenomenon, explicable, and formulable in terms of economic exchange. The relation of the individual to family, community, school, church, state is wholly a relation turning upon wealth, disguised sometimes under the form of other, but actually derived interests. Bernard of Clairvaux and Lord Byron, Washington and Benedict Arnold, Napoleon and Thoreau are simply variations of the economic man. Coliseum and Catacombs, Inquisition and Reformation, modern science and modern philanthropy are solely phenomena of economics. Let me not be understood to imply that any economist has ever avowed precisely this view. I am not aware that a theorist has been known to state his case in just this form. The other alternative then remains, viz., that social phenomena include more than economic phenomena, and social interpretation involves more than economic interpretation.

It would be difficult to name a recent economic treatise which does not tacitly, at least, admit that the operation of economic formulæ is subject to modifications in practice, which must be reckoned upon when economic theories are applied. This concession, however, falls very far short of the necessities of the case. It by no means necessarily connotes belief or admission on the part of the economist that the same exact, specialized, scientific processes are necessary in determining the modifications to which the economic formula is subject, which are demanded in derivation of the formula itself. It would not be difficult to collect economic arguments which evidently assume with confidence that the economic inquiry must be scientific, while the modifying judgments may be supplied by the economist as a man of common sense!

A layman may be permitted to divide economists roughly, according to superficial characteristics, into the mathematical and the sentimental schools. It has long been evident that while the sentimental economists have tended to minimize the significance of economic science, the mathematical economists have tended to overlook both the necessity and the difficulty of precise knowledge of extra-economic phenomena and laws. They have frequently appeared to believe that if an economist is scientific in the treatment of his own proper problems, the knowledge needed for combination with economic abstractions, if they are to pass into social programmes, will be added to him by unconscious absorption.

In a December review is a remark which affords an illustrative suggestion. The language is this: "The whole development of the nineteenth century has tended to emphasize the importance of a clear understanding of the workings of the social organism on the part of the intelligent public. . . . We might almost state in one sentence the whole purpose of economic study by saying that it is to enable the public to foresee the consequences of economic legislation."<sup>1</sup> The propositions are not quoted as evidence that their author takes a view differ-

<sup>1</sup> *JOURNAL OF POLITICAL ECONOMY*, December 1894, p. 107.

ent from that here proposed; but the language gives occasion for the qualification, from our standpoint, that there is no such thing as "economic legislation" pure and simple. The effects of legislation cannot, therefore, be discovered merely through perfection of the economic lens.

Currency laws, for example, probably approach the conception "economic legislation" as nearly as any legal enactments that can be cited; yet the monetary policy of nations, even when dictated by evidently sound statesmanship, must often vary from the requirements of abstract monetary science from consideration of a score of conditions in which economic elements are subordinate. Prevision of consequences to follow legislation that is primarily economic depends upon judgment of conditions which involve the economic element in every variety of proportions, from a maximum down to a minimum ratio. The fact that the attitude assumed last summer by the labor organizations toward the Interstate Commerce Law was so unexpected illustrates the inadequacy of all our processes of social forecast, but especially the impotence of attempted prevision along the line of economic sequence alone. Recent occurrences in the American bond market may also be referred to without further comment.

Just at this point sociology finds its primary function. That function corresponds with the fact that human life is an equation of more than one unknown quantity. Computing the value of the economic factor in the equation is but one of several preliminary processes, each of which consists in similar computation of the significance of a meaning term in the equation. Interpretation of actual social forces depends upon ability to find the significance of each of these factors and to combine them into a symmetrical, even if only an algebraic, formulation of the whole.

Sociology is accordingly the natural successor, heir and assign of the worthy but ineffective "Philosophy of History." The aim of the philosophers of history was precisely the initial object of sociology, viz., a conspectus of the correlation of the forces that have given human society its present character. The cardinal reason for failure to derive a credible philosophy

of history was that the attempts were made before the necessary material or method for positive philosophy was available. The philosophies of history have consequently been, in large part, generalizations of assumptions rather than of facts. Scientific methodology in ascertaining the facts which contain the process of social development is still in the formative stage. It is a desideratum, not an accepted and authoritative mode of procedure. Yet development of criticism in the various departments of inquiry from which the material of social philosophy must be drawn has made more scientific generalization desirable, and in a measure practicable. Sociology is, therefore, the philosophical correlative of the perfected criticism recently applied to various groups and series of social phenomena.

It is plain that the philosophy here contemplated is situated midway between investigation of particular aspects of social fact, with the resulting bodies of arranged knowledge composing the special social sciences; and on the other hand "social art," "practical civics," "the art of social control," or whatever we may call the programme of action which our philosophy sanctions.

We may point out again, in passing, that to one who takes this view of sociology it is anomalous to select economics and sociology for the invidious prominence of juxtaposition. Sociology is a step in generalization, the motive of which is to supplement researches into the different objective and subjective relations that condition human action, by attempting to organize the results of such preliminary researches. Of these relations there are those which the various physical and vital sciences explore. There is especially that branch of vital science which deals with man as "the highest zoölogical type." Then there are the variously classified inquiries which attempt to explain man's actions as an individual and as an element in social combinations—ethnology, history, demography, comparative politics, comparative economics, etc. Then there is psychology, in its various divisions, from experimental laboratory psychology to ethnic psychology. Finally, but relatively more instructive than all, there are the

actual contemporary activities of society which must be interpreted first as outgrowths of previous human activity, and then retro-actively as the most reliable clue to explanations of the interrelations of similar activities in the past.

It will be seen that the function of sociology as thus explained is, so far, not research in the exact sense at all, but resort to the sources from which results of special research are to be expected. Whatever may be true of sociologists, sociology is not properly to be credited with the discovery of primary facts. That work has to be done before sociology is possible. Sociology is, however, acquiring the merit of contending that the necessity of combining facts from these sources must have scientific recognition, and that consequently social programmes based on premises narrower than this synthesis, whether they be predicated on moral postulates alone on the one hand, or on mathematics alone on the other hand, must be rejected as unscientific.

The perception from which sociology takes its departure may be described in a somewhat different way. The desires which impel men to action are of numerous orders, which cannot be reduced to terms of a common concrete unit. These desires are related to each other, since they are directed towards objects for which undivided personalities strive. At the same time they are distinct, and viewed abstractly the corresponding satisfactions are ends in themselves. Thus men desire unimpeded exercise of physical capability; they desire those psychic interchanges which occur in companionship with fellow beings; they desire satisfaction of curiosity; they desire æsthetic enjoyment; they desire that adjustment to condition which insures the state of complaisance that we call peace of conscience. Each of these desires is as truly a part of normal men as the desire for wealth. Now the fact that wealth, in some minimum proportion, is essential to the emergence and development and satisfaction of these partially economic desires, does not change the complementary fact that the satisfaction of these desires depends upon other conditions than the possession of wealth; conditions which can-



not be understood without investigation as rigid as that to which economic relations must be subjected. Indeed, from the sociological standpoint, tacit assumption that economic science can be made the sufficient basis of a doctrine of human happiness, is comparable with an assumption that a general theory of prices can be deduced solely from the formula of diminishing returns in the extractive industries. To state the comparison directly, sociology recognizes the constant presence of the economic element in the problem of human happiness; but it discovers that as the immanent qualities of human nature unfold, while the *absolute* value of the economic element in welfare increases, its ratio to the sum of other elements consciously involved in happiness tends to diminish, somewhat as the phenomena of diminishing returns in agriculture lose their relative significance the farther the processes of manufacture carry transformation of the raw material.

The sociologist accordingly endorses, so far as the desideratum of social knowledge is concerned, Jane Carlyle's dictum: "The great bad is mixing things." The present campaign of sociology, as distinguished from economics, is for a clearing up of the confusion which is content with contemplation of man in two aspects: (1) economic man, (2) the undivided remainder of man. Far from depreciating the abstraction which has created the economic man, sociology tends to the conclusion that similar abstraction must create the physiological man, the social man (in the special sense), the intellectual man, the æsthetic man, the ethical man. The social unit postulated in our reasoning will be one part scientific concept and several parts empirical concept until these abstractions are derived and recombined into a synthetic, scientific concept of the real man.

From this point of view attention may again be called to the correlation, rather than the contrast between economics and sociology. Evident demand for analytical observation of man in the qualitatively distinct phases of his desire and endeavor, emphasizes the declaration that sociology is in no sense a rival of economics, any more than of physiology or of psychology. On

the contrary, sociology can have no reliable material to organize until economics, among the other antecedent sciences, has performed at least preliminary portions of its work.

It would not be pertinent to discuss in this paper the special contributions to knowledge of man and of society which antecedent sciences ought to furnish. In such discussion criticism of existing division of labor upon the material of social knowledge would be unavoidable, and such criticism is among the most important present tasks of social scientists. It will be sufficient to repeat that the facts from which knowledge of real man must be abstracted are in man's physical structure, and in his physical environment; in his actions from the birth of the race; and especially in his contemporary activities. Until antecedent investigation has gathered and grouped the facts from these sources, so that they may be further organized, theories about man are either generalizations of guesses as to matters of fact, or they are deductions from metaphysical assumptions, or they are involutions of the errors of both. Without implying any judgment of the scheme of classification, or any estimate of the accuracy of facts tabulated in Spencer's sociological charts, it is safe to assert that Spencer's proposed comprehensive survey of human conditions, acts and institutions, past and present, under categories permitting perception of permanently significant relations, was a sagacious proclamation of the programme which must furnish the material for valid generalization about society. The exhibit of this material, whether actual or prospective, was appropriately named Descriptive Sociology.

It must be admitted that the social sciences are not yet so distinctly methodized that the function of sociology is beyond dispute. The fact that the material for social philosophy is as yet comparatively meager has led some men to start from the sociological point of departure, but to take their scientific position in a part of the field of inquiry which belongs of right to other workers. Hence a confusion of distinctions, since the materials of these special divisions of social knowledge have not yet been fully exploited. Many men who call themselves

sociologists are at present mixing with the business of specialists in widely different lines of inquiry.

The sociologists would do well to confess this frankly. The only legitimate tasks at present open to social scientists are either old ones, subdivisions of old ones, or the task which becomes new with every considerable enlargement of knowledge; viz., that of organizing ascertained facts into a scientific basis for renewed special research on the one hand, and for the invention of social programmes on the other. The examinations of parts and phases of society thus far pursued have not resulted in knowledge sufficient for the sub-structure of an art of social coöperation that can establish a scientific character. Sociologists, perceiving the need of such building material, are making new demands upon the antecedent sciences. They are even plunging into the work of those sciences, and attempting to fix the name sociology upon the particular branch of investigation to which they confine their attention. Digressing for a moment for reference to terminology, I venture to observe that the conclusions of an amateur in anthropology or psychology or economics derive no respectability among masters in those sciences because arrived at under the name sociology. It is of course possible, by agreement, to make the term sociology generic for all the disciplines that contribute to knowledge of society, or identical with the phrase used in this paper with that meaning—viz., “the social sciences.” If the term sociology is used with a *specific* meaning—then it must either be immediately concerned with special phenomena, or with the *generalization* of special phenomena. If the former, it is one of the antecedent procedures tributary to social interpretation in general, and there appears no better reason for forcing the name sociology upon established sciences when recruits enter their ranks, than for calling horticulture transcendental philosophy when Emerson works in his garden. If by sociology is meant the work of assimilating the knowledge of society derived from different researches, there should be careful discrimination between sociological use of data furnished by special inquiries, and attempts by sociol-

ogists to improve upon the work of specialists in their own fields.

It should be observed further, that sociology as here understood, being philosophy constructed by synthesis of scientifically ascertained knowledge of society, must of necessity be largely descriptive and realistic, rather than abstract and ideal. By way of concession to our mental limitations, we are obliged to analyze objects of knowledge into unreality before we can think them integrally. Absurdly enough we are disposed to fall into the fallacy that our processes cease to be scientific when we proceed to think the analyzed elements back toward verisimilitude. This mental trait opposes a serious obstacle to recognition of the value of social synthesis which thinks together into a representation of actual society the abstractions into which society has been artificialized for intellectual convenience. A recent criticism of concrete social philosophy constructed on the proposed lines asserts: "In the grouping of facts here set forth, regard has not always been had to the essential principles of classification. Instead of gathering social facts into homogeneous groups, according as they illustrate certain clearly defined relations, such as economical or political relations, the purpose here seems to have been to make such groups of facts as, when presented, would describe particular institutions or 'social aggregates.' Under this method, the phenomena brought together in any given group are not necessarily of the same kind, and the groups thus constituted are consequently of no special importance for logical purposes. They are such groups as arise from that form of analysis which is involved in a description of any given social institution. The method here involved does not lead us far towards general scientific truth, but furthers minute description. It gives us a picture of society with all its details clearly visible, but it does not reveal the laws which underlie its being."<sup>1</sup>

That which is here asserted to be the fault and the failure of the synthetic method of social exposition which this paper recommends is precisely the merit claimed for such synthesis. If there

<sup>1</sup>JOURNAL OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, December 1894, pp. 28-29.

is anything more deplorable in science than the "great bad" of "mixing things," it is the great *worse* of abstraction so persistent that things are kept apart which ought to mix. Logical categories are arbitrary in so far as we fail to reset them in their actual articulations with the other logical categories abstracted from the same real objects. It is only by synthesis of logically constructed groups of phenomena with other similar groups that we are able to understand the concrete facts which hold and hide these phenomena in combinations.

A geologist's account of a fossil or a rock formation, for example, might be criticised in precisely the language just cited. The report would be successful however, not in proportion as it used the object in question as an occasion for emphasizing the classifications of physics, chemistry, biology, climatology, etc., but in proportion as it exhibited the precise conjunction, in this particular object, of influences which would not be intelligible if they had not previously been abstracted, criticised and classified by special sciences.

The object of science is not reached when it has divided up reality into portions which the mind can deal with separately; but rather when abstraction has proceeded so far that, by its assistance, the components of reality can be thought in their actual relations. The phenomena of a society can only be thought as they are, when they are thought in groups within which the facts of one logical category overlap and interlace those of many others. This is but repetition of the main contentions of this paper, viz., that knowledge of society is conditioned, (1) upon development of the rudimentary sciences of special social phenomena; (2) upon synthesis of the social sciences in description of concrete phases of human association.

The philosophy which is the sociological desideratum is interpretation of the relations borne to each other by the distinct phases of human capability discoverable in human actions; and the only thinkable means to such interpretation is comparison of recombined analytical conclusions with the concrete reality society, to see if the thought so constructed corresponds with

the object. If there is not such correspondence, both the accepted data and the processes of synthesis must be reconsidered for discovery of the error.

With the acquisition of systematized knowledge about individual and social facts, coördinated in "sciences," and synthesized in descriptive philosophy, the opportunity for sociology proper begins. Presuming that the special sciences have contributed all they can bring to the interpretation of society, the peculiar obligation remains to make this knowledge available for guidance in social coöperation. By this it is not meant that sociology may become a collection of principles covering the whole area of conduct, and capable of being drawn out into deductions worthy to control every choice of action. It is assumed rather that the sum of available knowledge about the facts of human relations, if properly organized, will contain all the specific indications obtainable anywhere about possibilities of human improvement, and about methods and means of utilizing those possibilities. This amounts to the expectation that the classified material of social knowledge which we name collectively descriptive sociology, will constitute the material of social philosophy that shall contain implicitly two elements of general knowledge: (1) demonstration of more particulars in which men are destined by their nature to realize the vague conception, "happiness;" (2) indication of more precise adaptations of means to ends in the attainment of happiness.

These specifications describe sociology in its three chief aspects. In the first place, it is a body of arranged facts; or, more precisely, it is based upon a body of arranged facts. But interest in all the classes of facts contained in social phenomena long ago caused a certain division of the labor of investigating them; and, apart from the process of synthesis there remains in this field nothing but readjustment of the divisions, and refinement and further application of the method. This work is logically antecedent to sociology, although, as a matter of fact, there must be perpetual reciprocity between the logically antecedent collection and analysis and the logically subsequent

synthesis. The work of organizing special knowledge of social facts into an articulated exhibit of the structure and functions of actual society is not within the proper scope of the special investigations. It is indicated, however, as the next logical stage in the assimilation of knowledge; and sociology accordingly undertakes a part of social science supplementary to the divisions of labor previously provided for, a part in which sociology is entirely dependent upon antecedent research; and in the first instance the function of the sociologist as related to that of the antecedent investigators is analogous to that of the physical geographer in relation to the fundamental physical sciences.

In the second place, sociology confronts the phenomena of *waste* from maladjustment of individual and social effort. The quality and quantity of happiness which men enjoy do not correspond with the evident capacity of men for happiness; and the endeavor to gain happiness is not directed by large intelligence of the elements involved in human happiness, or of the conditions upon which their attainment depends. The concrete facts of human life need to be interpreted with reference to their contained implications as to the kinds and combinations of satisfaction which human qualities and conditions indicate as their correlates. Systematized knowledge of positively determined human potencies and conditions is the only authoritative source and criterion of concrete social ideals, and of precise ethical precepts. The only visible way out of the immemorial contention between moral systems deduced from the arbitrarily constructed concept "goodness," on the one hand, and the arbitrarily constructed concept "happiness," on the other hand, is through scientific correlation of the qualities of human beings and the consequences of human action, in which correlation happiness and goodness meet. The task of determining this immanent ideal, and of construing it in its application to particular social conditions, fills a distinct section of sociology.

In the third place, scientifically determined social facts and relations, real and potential, contain the only credible information about means available for realizing indicated social improve-

ment. The section of sociology about which there seems to be least controversy among sociologists themselves, is that final portion to which the work of Professor Lester F. Ward has probably given the permanent designation "dynamic sociology." Whether the boundaries of that division of sociology are to be equally permanent is perhaps questionable; but the ultimate function of sociology as I conceive it, is to discover the principles of coöperation by application of which human society may adopt the most effective means of securing happiness. Here, as before, sociology is a combining and correlating procedure. There is implicitly, at least, a technical art correlative with each special social science. The vital sciences, for example, may discover the most effective means of guarding against contagious diseases, of preventing propagation of the unfit, of breeding from the best human stock; economic science may discover the most effective means of creating public revenues, or of organizing general industries with a view to the maximum of production; political science may elaborate the technique of administration or may perfect theories of constitutional changes; pedagogic science may develop the methodology of education; ethical science may systematize the laws of possible control of men by moral suasion; but neither of these sciences, as such, has the purpose, the point of view, or the power to derive a philosophy of life which shall provide for the coöperation of these and like technical means, to procure a rationally proportional maximum of the collective ends of life.

Such a comprehensive philosophy, of some sort or other, which men always will have in their sub-consciousness, can be derived only from *a priori* principles or prejudices, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, from such synthesis of social knowledge as this paper has suggested. For example, the fundamental technical as well as theoretical question of the relation of the state, on the one hand, and of government, on the other, to radical human desires, will not be approached scientifically until it is investigated from the outlook of the scientific organization of social knowledge here recommended.



A readjustment of the boundaries of the sciences of social fact is taking place, whether scholars approve the reorganization or not. Whether or not the subdivisions of sociology which this paper suggests become conventional, is to the writer of little consequence. The perception which I am most concerned to sharpen is that our power to combine intelligently for the conquest of happiness depends (1) upon precise knowledge of the actual elements of social fact, as it has been and is, both in the process of becoming and in the products that already appear; (2) upon intelligent conception of the possibilities of human realization, as indicated by the potencies patent in human action; (3) of the dynamic agencies within human reach for the achievement of composite happiness.

Whether our work is one of the complementary analytical processes, or one of the supplementary synthetic processes, we need to work in intelligent coöperation, in order to approach the common end, knowledge of the meaning of life, and achievement of life's largest abundance.

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